Redefining the Department of Environment and Resource Management

Introduction

In March, 1993, Cabinet merged the Department of Environment and Public Safety and the Department of Natural Resources into Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management (SERM). During its first year of operation, SERM was organized into four divisions: Policy and Programs, Operations, Environmental Assessment and Management Services.

Through a five-year process of "Redefining the Department" the organization was transformed, developing a radically new corporate strategy and making sweeping changes to the department's structure, processes and culture. In the process, the department's efficiency has improved and SERM is better positioned to address current and future challenges to the province's environment and to resource sustainability.

Saskatchewan
Environment
and Resource
Management

Why Did The Department Need To Be Redesigned?

To respond to local, provincial and global challenges to the provincial environment, it was clear the department needed to change the way it provided its services. SERM was being challenged by both internal and external pressures to become more effective and efficient. Problems in the department's performance began to surface and internal communication and coordination problems were making it difficult for staff to fulfil their duties. Future challenges were expected to put even greater stresses on the department's ability to adequately respond. Some of the pressures to change and how they affected the department include:

External Pressures:

Financial

The Province of Saskatchewan's debt was $13.8 billion in 1993. The government committed itself to balancing the provincial budget, and as part of the effort to control expenditures, every department of government faced budget cuts. In SERM's case the budget was reduced from $99.4 million in 1992-93, to $86.8 million in 1996-97, a total reduction of $12.6 million, nearly 13 per cent of SERM's total budget. These budgetary pressures also encouraged the department to question the effectiveness and efficiency of its programming.

Government Priorities and Direction

The Provincial Government identified four priorities for all departments to build into their corporate plans:

- streamline government;
- demonstrate sound financial management;
- build the economy of the future; and
- preserve the cornerstones of our quality of life.

Public Expectations of Service Delivery:

Customers were demanding one-window service, to be able to go into a local department office and obtain the service they required, rather than contacting the person with the particular expertise or authority in central office.

Consultant's Review of Organization

After the severe forest fires of 1995, the department retained a team of expert consultants to review its forest fire protection program. The Forest Fire Policy Study recommended a wide range of changes to both policy and operations, including dedicated fire management officers, consolidation of small fire crews into better equipped and more centralized initial attack bases and closure of small fire bases.

In 1996, a review of SERM was done by management consultants Deloitte Touche to identify potential cost savings. The consultant identified six areas in which the department could potentially save between $3.8 and $6.2 million:

- management;
- administrative and program support (secretarial, human resources and financial);
- program delivery (central branches and regional offices);
- integrated resource management (pooling staff to apply a range of skills to problem solving);
- alternative service delivery; and
- central government-wide systems.

Internal Pressures:

The department was experiencing difficulty in meeting its most basic mission - to manage, protect and enhance the province's natural resources and environment.

There were inefficiencies in coordinating the department's internal activities.

The number of programs being delivered by SERM required field staff to have knowledge of more areas than was realistic. A conservation officer could be fighting a forest fire, investigating a poacher or working in a park on any given day. Field staff needed more specialized skills and knowledge than this generalist approach allowed.

There was a need to increase individual staff autonomy in their work. The Deloitte Touche review pointed out the department had too many layers of management; managers had too few staff reporting to them; and the administrative process was inefficient. There was a need to improve customer service: SERM had administrative capacity in each branch, in regional and local offices as well as a central administration branch. To pay a supplier or an expense claim under SERM's former administrative system could involve several people, including the person filling out the form, a clerk, a branch or regional manager and staff in the central office administrative branch for review and final processing into the government's central administrative systems. This process created duplication in administrative activities and in record keeping and delayed processing. Overall, it was inefficient and expensive for the department to maintain this approach.

There was also a need to encourage sustainable development: Sustainable development involves increasing the degree of environmental stewardship in industry, communities and among individuals. While there is a range of policies governing many of the province's industries, SERM's capacity to monitor compliance and encourage local participation in environmental decision making was limited. To encourage sustainable development, SERM needed to be closer to its clientele to increase community liaison, planning, monitoring and development of partnerships between business, citizens and government.

This broad range of pressures from outside and within the department made it apparent that simply shrinking the organization to adjust to budget cuts would reduce the department's ability to adequately respond to current and future challenges. What was needed was to completely re-think how SERM provided environmental protection and resource management services to the province. It meant more than changing the organization's structure; it meant examining the department's core mission and values and every aspect of the department's activities to ensure they contributed to the department's mission.

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Organization Before "Redefining The Department"

Mission:

In 1993, the Department of Environment and Public Safety (DEPS) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) were almalgamated into Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management (SERM). Prior to this almalgamation, DEPS was responsible for air, water and soil while DNR was responsible for fisheries, forests, lands, parks and wildlife. The new department's mission was: "To manage, enhance, protect and sustain Saskatchewan's wealth of natural and environmental resources (fish, wildlife, lands, forest, parks and protected areas, air, water and soil) for conservation, recreation, social and economic purposes and to ensure they are sustained for the use of present and future generations."

Strategy:

SERM's initial strategy was based on the theory that careful management of the component parts of the ecosystem would result in healthy functioning of the whole ecosystem. As a result, the department was organized to manage specific resource sectors (fish, wildlife, forests) for their perpetual use. It was believed that goals such as biological diversity (biodiversity), sustainable development and ecosystem management required specific activities to support them but generally they could be achieved through the good management of the specific resources. The department's strategy included primary goals, each with its own series of related tactical objectives for the year.

Purpose and Objectives of "Redefining the Department":

Goal: to create a single agency providing integrated and comprehensive management of our natural resources and environment consistent with the principle of long-term sustainability for the benefit of Saskatchewan people.

Principles of Organization (Strategic Orientation)

- based on ecosystem management;
- protect the province's biodiversity;
- support sustainable development;
- encourage partnerships and public involvement;
- integrate policy and programs;
- achieve organizational efficiencies;
- decentralize program delivery;
- provide preventative, risk-based environmental protection; and
- increase emphasis on economic development.

SERM's new corporate strategy is built largely around the concept of ecosystem management. Ecosystem management provided a new philosophical framework, or perspective, for department staff to use in making decisions. It is based on the belief that balanced management of ecological systems and human activities will maintain the health and integrity of an ecosystem for all species, including humans. It assumes ecosystem management is best accomplished by ensuring land stewardship is sensitive to the needs of local communities and contributes to long-term community and economic sustainability.

To facilitate this type of an approach to environmental management in the province, core elements that supported all of the strategic principles guiding "Redefining the Department" were identified. They are:

1. Changing the boundaries of the department's regional operations from a design based on patterns of settlement and local jurisdictional boundaries to a design based on the ecological considerations including the province's natural ecozones (grassland, parkland, forest and shield). The basis for this design is that areas with common ecological features will share many of the same environmental challenges and will, in turn, need a common range of expertise to resolve ecological problems. Ecosystem management complements and, in fact, requires the department to achieve two other strategic principles, protecting biodiversity and supporting sustainable development.
2. Decentralizing decision-making by transferring responsibility for program delivery to the ecoregion field staff. Three strategic principles listed below are complemented by decentralizing decision making:
   - the need to encourage partnerships and increase public involvement in decision making as a way to foster environmental stewardship in the province;
   - to encourage sustainable economic development to improve private sector participation in solving environmental challenges; and
   - to provide preventive, risk-based environmental protection as a way to maximize the impact and value of staff effort in environmental protection.
3. Implementing resource management to increase collaboration among departments, branches and individuals so all the expertise relevant to an issue is involved in identifying a solution, as opposed to limiting it largely to the expertise available in the resource sector (branch) most directly affected.

In applying these concepts to the "Redefining the Department" initiative the department also needed to identify operating efficiencies to achieve budget reduction targets set by the province. To accomplish this involved a major re-engineering of three areas of the department - management, program delivery and administrative and program support. A key element to successfully implementing such sweeping changes was a comprehensive, well-planned process.

Redesign Process

SERM's transformational change required a process that not only helped smooth the transition and clarify the specific objectives and actions required, but also fundamentally reinforced the stated values of the new organization.

The redesign process consisted of five phases:

- integrate the two departments and confirm the new vision;
- integrate regional program delivery;
- integrate policy and programs to support regional program delivery;
- combine administrative support; and
- refine program integration and cultural management.

Identifying the new organization's strategic position was an important first step. It was closely followed by identifying corporate values to help guide decision making on the application of specific changes and the identification of principles to guide the reorganization process itself. These principles allowed staff to participate in redesigning the organization and helped gain their support and cooperation in the changes that followed. It also helped staff focus on the positive opportunities associated with a more effective organization and away from the need to reduce staff levels to meet budget targets. Consultants were used to help identify areas of the organization where efficiency could be improved.

Integrating regional program delivery was an important step both symbolically and in terms of process. It provided a clear, early signal of senior management's commitment to the "Redefining the Department" initiative and provided the foundation upon which many of the future organizational changes were based.

Elements of the Process Critical to its Success

Strategic principles identified at the outset by senior management, clarified the key elements of the organizational positioning. They helped guide decision-making and allowed both management and staff to participate in redesigning the organization. They are:

- staff involvement;
- cooperation and understanding are key;
- maintain a corporate focus;
- staff implications will be dealt with fairly and openly;
- stakeholder consultation is critical;
- communication is critical; and
- Saskatchewan Government Employees Union involvement.

The commitment of senior management helped ensure the initiative would be completed and was particularly important during changes in Minister and Deputy Minister. The personal commitment of senior management ensured regular and consistent face-to-face communication with almost all staff. Adequate time and resources were essential to engage staff in the process and to minimize surprises. Had the redesign been completed more quickly it would have negatively affected staff understanding, participation and cooperation.

Extensive communication characterised by honesty, consistency and as much person-to-person contact as possible helped reduce surprises and enabled staff to make good decisions on issues affecting both the department and them personally.

The use of cross-department teams helped ensure the initiative stayed on track, used department expertise from a wide range of disciplines, facilitated communication and maximized staff participation in and ownership of changes.

All actions were thoroughly planned prior to implementation to ensure decisions were sound and the transitions were smooth.

Committees: A transition team and divisional review teams (Regional Operations, Policy and Programs and Administrative/Support) were instrumental in integrating policy and programs to support regional program delivery. They recommended new processes and structures and guided implementation of the change process so it reflected the department's strategic principles while engaging all staff.

Following the broad strokes of redesigning the organization, eight working groups and eight project teams were created to address specific issues or projects required to adopt ecosystem management approaches throughout SERM and to monitor consistency of actions with the corporate values. This refinement is intended to solidify the new thinking and new ways of doing business throughout the organization.

Working Groups: Ecological Classification Committee; Ecological Operational Framework; Science, Research and Information; Ecological Planning; Resource Management and Use Guidelines; Watershed Management; Ecological Monitoring; and Staff Information and Education.

Project Teams: Fish and Wildlife Management Model; Biodiversity Action Plan; Representative Areas Network; Threatened and Endangered Species; Forest Ecosystem Protection Policy: Risk Management; Contaminated Site Liability Policy; and Resource Protection Action Plan for Parks and Ecological Reserves.

Implementation

Some of the most commonly cited staff concerns were:

- suspicion that managers would protect their own jobs;
- concerns among managers that they may no longer be managers;
- fear of losing their job;
- concerns that what they had been doing in the past was of limited value;
- belief that ecosystem management was a fad which would go away;
- worry that the changes they believed really needed to be made would not get done; and
- belief the reorganization planning had been pre-determined by management and staff input would not make any difference.

Communication and Education:

Constant and consistent communication throughout the organization was critical to the process. A communications strategy developed for the redesign recognized:

- communication of sensitive information is best done in person and by the immediate supervisor of affected staff;
- not all staff or stakeholders accept change at the same pace; and
- people learn in different ways.

The department's principal challenge among staff was to help defuse high stress levels by providing factual information about decisions made and decisions yet to be made, and to provide opportunities for staff to be involved in decision making. The challenge for external stakeholders was to reassure them their particular interests would continue to have a place in the department and changes to the department would not impair SERM's ability to protect the environment.

The overall approach to communications was low key, focussing on open, interpersonal approaches through meetings, presentations and briefings, with print and other media used to reinforce and

educate. An emphasis was placed on using a variety of techniques and on consistency. Several mechanisms were established to generate feedback from staff and clients. The most important of these was through the extensive use of meetings but also included e-mail and three surveys.

Public Involvement:

Core Teams used SERM's public involvement process to obtain input from staff, as well as stakeholders both within and outside of government. The principal benefit was that it encouraged and provided opportunities for input from each staff member on the redesign including structural, functional and process changes, which helped staff take ownership of the redesign.

Corporate Planning Process:

SERM's annual corporate planning process begins in October, with implementation beginning at the start of the next fiscal year (April 1). This regular corporate planning process was used to integrate recommendations from the Core Teams, the three Divisional Teams and the Transition Team that were approved by Executive Committee. While some of the organizational changes occurred during 1994 and 1995, most of the detailed planning to identify redesign actions occurred during 1996 with implementation in 1997.

Training and Professional Development:

There are four general types of training that either have been or will be used to facilitate the reorganization:

- training for senior administration in managing the psychological aspects of the change;
- workshops available to all staff on coping skills for positively adapting to change and managing change on a personal basis;
- training on competencies needed in the new organization; and
- job-specific technical skills.

Job-specific technical skill training is identified and coordinated by individual branches. Training elements of a more corporate-wide nature (needed by staff in several branches) are coordinated through SERM's Corporate Development Unit.

Future Needs:

To ensure the successful completion of the organizational transformation, management cited a number of required ongoing actions:

- to be vigilant in actively managing the corporate culture to facilitate transition;
- continued communication and emphasis on the redesign's purpose and expected benefits ;
- flexibility to quickly adjust aspects of the redesign that aren't working well;
- to continue to refine how staff work together; and
- to continue to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the changes.

Progress To Date:

Mandate

The organization's mandate has not changed. It is to manage, enhance and protect Saskatchewan's natural and environmental resources (fish, wildlife, lands, forests, parks, air, water and soil) for conservation, recreation, social and economic purposes and to ensure they are sustained for future generations. However, the ways in which the department works toward achieving its goals are now fundamentally different.

Extent and Core Features of the Redesign

SERM adopted a new orientation designed to provide all staff with a common perspective on the issues the department faces and a wide range of new approaches to delivering its services that, together, position the department closer to its clientele to promote environmental stewardship. It dramatically improved its overall efficiency by examining every aspect of what the organization does and how it best corresponds to the new strategy.

Changes Affecting Organizational Structure

The new strategic orientation is built around the concept of ecosystem management. This required structural changes, literally, from the ground up. The most noticeable change was the adjustment of former administrative regions to more closely correspond with natural ecological boundaries. To complement the management of these EcoRegions, SERM moved from a highly centralized bureaucracy, where coordination occurred mainly at the organization's top to a more decentralized system where coordination could occur at the working level. The principal structural changes included:

- six regions containing 60 districts were replaced with five Eco-Regions containing 26 areas;
- resource sector branches were integrated to improve staff collaboration (Municipal, Industrial and Commercial branches were merged into the Environmental Protection Branch; Fisheries and Wildlife branches were merged into Fish and Wildlife Branch);
- Corporate Services Division was redesigned from six branches (Finance and Administration, Systems, Legislative Services, Education and Communication Services, Business Improvement and Human Resources) into three branches (Communication Services, Service Bureaus and Information Management) and two corporate development units (Finance and Evaluation and Organizational Development);

- six service bureaus were created to provide common administrative support functions (finance, human resources, general administration and systems) to the ecoregion and central offices;
- three new units were created - Sustainable Economic Development, Aboriginal Liaison and Public Involvement;
- the department's full time staff equivalent was reduced by 159 or more than 11 per cent;
- one complete regional management team was eliminated;
- the department's span of reporting increased from three staff per manager to approximately seven; and
- managers for environmental protection and integrated resource management were added to regional management teams.

Changes Affecting Process

SERM reevaluated core processes to align them with the new strategy and to find efficiencies. The result was decentralizing program delivery so staff coordination and decisions on service could be made faster and closer to the clientele. In decentralizing, SERM transferred program delivery responsibility from central branches to the new EcoRegions. A second key change in decision making processes was the movement to integrated resource management (IRM). IRM is essentially improving the quality of collaboration between departments, branches and individuals so expertise from all resource areas and specialities relevant to an issue is involved as opposed to using specialists solely from the resource area most directly affected.

Some actions taken to establish an integrated approach included amalgamating resource sector branches and deploying a fuller range of expertise to the EcoRegions where resource sector specialists now work together in integrated resource management teams. A renewed focus on information technology improved staff access to information and communication at all levels.

A third major change to SERM's processes was the streamlining of administration and support services. Prior to the redesign, SERM had administrative capacities in each branch, each region and most district offices, as well as a central administration branch in head office. This structure was replaced with a system of four regional and two central service bureaus which provide common administrative support functions (finance, human resources, general administration and systems) directly at the source of transactions and a smaller Corporate Development Unit which provides central coordination and some specialized services.

A fourth fundamental change was to increase public participation in decision making related to environmental issues. In 1994, the department created a Public Involvement Unit to lead these activities for SERM and to work internally to integrate the theme of partnerships and public

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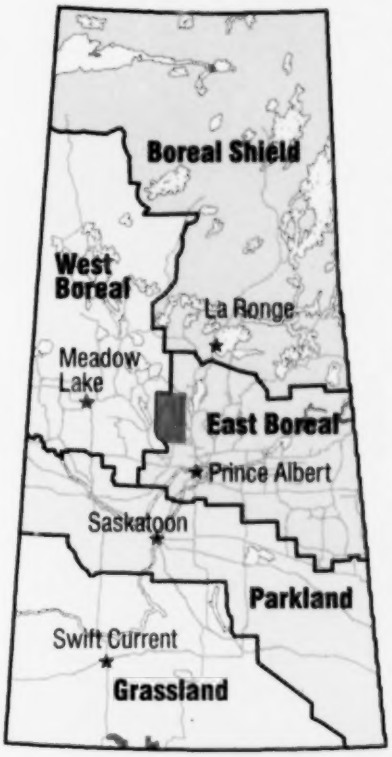

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A fourth fundamental change was to increase public participation in decision making related to environmental issues. In 1994, the department created a Public Involvement Unit to lead these activities for SERM and to work internally to integrate the theme of partnerships and public

involvement into the basic approach to business throughout the department. The process of increasing public involvement has been strengthened by the addition of environmental protection staff to regional offices to increase local liaison, planning and monitoring, and by the creation of an Aboriginal Liaison Unit and a Sustainable Economic Development Unit.

Additional changes to process or to support changes in process included:

- corporate planning was enhanced to engage operational delivery staff at the initial stages and throughout the planning process;
- information management activities throughout SERM were consolidated into a single branch to achieve consistency and efficiency and improve the collection of and access to information;
- the use of cross department teams increased, particularly through the Ecosystems Management Projects initiative, which has 16 different projects underway to help establish ecosystem management approaches throughout the department;
- conservation officers and other field staff have been 'streamed' from providing generalist services to partial specializations in park area management, forest protection and fire management, or resource protection;
- head office activities were focussed on strategic policy and program development;
- program delivery responsibility was fully assigned to the EcoRegion and field offices; and
- all of SERM's procedures, processes and systems were examined and refined to reduce overlap and duplication.

Changes Affecting Corporate Culture:

To support its new strategy, SERM reshaped the organization's corporate culture. The most dominant element of the transformation was the adoption of ecosystem management as the basis of the corporate strategy and organization. This concept provides the context for how SERM has organized itself, for the activities it undertakes, how it does them and the decision-making of individual staff. The Organizational Development Working Group and the Education and Information Group are both working to improve internal understanding of the management system and identify professional development and training required to align skills with functions.

The department identified 12 corporate values that are seen to be reflected in the way the organization does business which, together with the strategic principles, helped guide decision-making during the process of redefining the department. These values are:

- Inclusiveness
- Local knowledge
- Service
- Risk taking
- Innovation
- Creativity
- Continuous improvement
- Diversity
- Accountability
- Collective we
- Flexibility
- Systems thinking.

Virtually all elements of the reorganization reflect the department's new values. Some of the changes affecting the corporate culture include:

- SERM's dramatically increased emphasis on public involvement and partnerships to reduce control-style relationships and increase environmental stewardship;
- organizational barriers to communication are disappearing as a result of the integration of resource management and environmental protection staff in both central and regional offices;
- decentralization of program delivery to EcoRegion offices, the overall decrease in management throughout SERM and the corresponding increase in autonomy and authority for the EcoRegions are improving internal communication and staff empowerment,
- increased use of teams, technology and other horizontal and vertical communication techniques helped build an overall sense of team spirit;
- increased emphasis on service particularly in the administration and program support areas; and
- adopting a series of core values which formed the basis for decisions around both the reorganization strategy and the process used during the "Redefining the Department" initiative.

Span of Control:

The department is significantly flatter and less centralized. The new units, new relationships among existing branches and new branch names are significant reflections of the extent of the redesign.

SERM's total staff level (permanent and non-permanent) in 1992-93 was 1383, while in 1996-97 total staff level declined to 1224, a reduction of more than 11 per cent.

The span of control ranged from one to 11 with an average of three under the old structure. The new span of control now, on average, is seven.

Evaluation of the Reorganization

The savings and other benefits derived from this redesign were not achieved without incurring significant costs. The change process has extended over five years and demanded considerable effort by SERM management and staff. Costs for staff time and lost productivity are not available. The one-time transition costs associated with the implementation of the Deloitte Touche recommendations for the 1997-98 fiscal year total $3.067 million and resulted in a reduction of 93 FTE's and annual savings of $4.1 million.

In total, the "Redefining the Department" initiative has produced actual annual savings of $12.9 million and a reduction of 159 FTE's through early retirement and job abolishment since 1992-93.

Assessment

The greatest challenge facing SERM in the reorganization process was finding ways to incorporate the concept of ecosystem management into SERM's structure, processes and culture and to do this in a way that achieved the required savings and efficiencies, without sacrificing organizational effectiveness. Ultimately, the success of SERM's reorganization will be determined by the overall health of the provincial environment.

Early indicators suggest the organization has succeeded in transforming itself according to the strategic principles guiding the redesign. An initial assessment on each of these principles is provided below.

Ecosystem Management

Sixteen special project teams were created to integrate the concept of ecosystem management throughout the department and to complete a number of projects required for SERM to be effective in ecosystem management. In April 1998, a major conference on "Ecosystem Management in Action" was held to report on progress. A strategic plan will be in place in April 1999. All information technology activities were amalgamated into a new branch and increased emphasis placed on building capacity to collect, analyse and share information to support ecosystem planning and management throughout SERM.

Decentralize Program Delivery

To complement the ecosystem management philosophy, the department's principal actions to decentralize program delivery were:

- moved program delivery responsibility to the EcoRegion offices;
- enhanced involvement of the EcoRegions in corporate planning;
- increased the range of staff expertise and staff numbers in the EcoRegions (added an environmental protection manager, integrated resource manager and complete support service capabilities); and
- increased the discretion of EcoRegion directors and staff to perform their duties more creatively.

Partnerships and Public Involvement

Decentralization has moved SERM closer to its clientele and improved the capacity to develop partnerships and involve the public in addressing environmental issues. SERM's skills, experience and commitment to public involvement and partnerships has grown to be one of its greatest strengths.

Achieve Organizational Efficiencies

SERM is using fewer financial and human resources and has created an organization prepared to more effectively manage the province's environment and natural resources.

Management costs have been reduced, increasing the span of control. Administrative services have been streamlined by creating six service bureaus serving the province combining the administrative capability that existed in individual branches, regions and in the central administration branch.

Support Sustainable Development

The department defines sustainable development and ecosystem management similarly and the efforts to support ecosystem management contribute directly to sustainable development. Environmental stewardship is central to the concept of sustainable development and the Public Involvement Unit's focus on encouraging environmental stewardship plays a central role supporting sustainable development. Another important element is the shift in Environmental Protection Branch to increased emphasis on compliance monitoring, pollution prevention and environmental standards. The Economic Development Unit and the Aboriginal Liaison Unit also enhance the department's capacity to support sustainable development.

Our Corporate Values

Integrate Policy and Program Areas with Regional Program Delivery

Integration among staff has been improved through several measures. SERM has increased the involvement of the EcoRegions in the corporate planning process, increased the use of cross department teams, amalgamated resource sector branches in central offices, clarified the roles of head office and the regions and added new expertise to the regions (integrated resource managers and environmental protection staff). Information technology is also helping to improve access to information and communication among staff at all levels.

Provide Preventative, Risk-based Environmental Protection

Environmental Protection Branch has shifted its emphasis from regulation and licencing to working with industry on pollution prevention, increasing environmental stewardship and directing efforts to issues with the greatest risk to the provincial environment. Environmental protection officers in the EcoRegions enhance local liaison, planning and monitoring capabilities. Environmental protection duties have been added to the responsibilities of conservation officers. These changes have fundamentally shifted the nature of environmental protection in the province.

Increase Emphasis on Economic Development

The Economic Development Unit has assumed responsibility for promoting the development of Saskatchewan business, encouraging new environmental protection services technologies in support of sustainable development, and for fostering a greater awareness of economic development in the department.

The department identified a series of corporate values that needed to be featured in the new organization and which, together with the strategic principles, helped guide decision making among management and staff during the process of redefining the department.

Service

The focus on service within SERM and its ability to respond have been improved by adding new services, making several improvements to existing services and increasing the emphasis among staff on improving the quality of service provided to clients. In response to stakeholder demand, a number of new services are now available through the department including a Public Involvement Unit, an Economic Development Unit, an Aboriginal Liaison Unit, Service Bureaus and an integrated approach to resource management.

Several existing services have been improved by moving service closer to the clientele (ie. providing environmental protection staff in the EcoRegions and assigning environmental protection responsibilities to conservation officers). Regional offices have been given greater flexibility and capability to respond to local client needs. The creation of service bureaus and an increased emphasis on the service they provide is helping staff recognize administration and support services as an essential part of program delivery needs and an important part of the regional management teams. Forest Ecosystems Branch has improved service by broadening the definition of SERM's responsibility to the forest and its stakeholders and by radically altering the branch's functions to reflect the new responsibilities.

Creativity and Innovation

The new organization enhanced creativity and innovation by improving communication within the department and between the department and other stakeholders. Smaller and flatter organizational structure, increased use of task forces and project teams, integration of the various resource sector specialists and an emphasis on partnerships and greater public involvement in decision making facilitate this approach. The scope of the organizational redesign itself reinforces for all staff the value of thinking and doing things more creatively. The department's increased openness to involving stakeholders, government departments, branches and staff is a clear signal that new ideas are valued.

Continuous Improvement

SERM's support for creativity and innovation complement the quest for continuous improvement. The Organizational Development Working Group and the Education and Information Group were created to champion continuous learning and improvement through professional and personal development.

Accountability

The department's structural and policy changes designed to reduce bureaucracy and decentralize decision making are increasing personal accountability throughout the organization. Clarification of roles in policy development and program delivery between central and EcoRegion offices has improved individual accountability, as has strengthening the EcoRegion offices with additional staff. Staff participation in the redesign process was an important step in reinforcing the sense of personal ownership of issues facing the department. The department emphasized increasing environmental stewardship and accountability among industry and individuals, through the change in focus of the Environmental Protection Branch and creation of the Public Involvement Unit, the Economic Development Unit and the Aboriginal Liaison Unit.

Inclusiveness and Diversity

The reorganization process was designed to encourage and support the involvement of all staff. Increased use of teams and integration of resource sector staff throughout SERM promote inclusiveness by reducing structural barriers to communication. Creation of service bureaus in each EcoRegion creates opportunities for administration and support staff to become more of a partner in the management team. An emphasis on partnerships and public involvement improves the acceptance of others and of new ideas in the department.

Local Knowledge

The regional offices' ability to concentrate on one ecoregion and the common issues affecting the landscape will help to increase the depth of the department's local knowledge. The increased strength of the regions will improve the department's ability to access others in the community with insight into the issues. Partnerships and public involvement bring in knowledge from outside the department to help address environmental problems.

Flexibility

The flatter, decentralized organization is designed to increase flexibility and regional autonomy in responding to local needs. Relieving head office staff of program delivery work to focus on policy development ensures the department is more responsive to provincial issues. The application of integrated resource management and an increased value on creativity will keep the department open to new thinking. Increased use of teams and improved efficiency in administration are helping to improve the department's responsiveness.

Systems Thinking

The strategy of organizing around the concept of ecosystems has affected the structure and functions of the entire department. It is reflected in the analysis and redesign of the functions performed in some of the program branches, such as Forest Ecosystems Branch, and in the redesign of administrative and program support services. These areas of the department show little resemblance to their previous form, with a new emphasis on managing the systems or processes of their areas of responsibility.

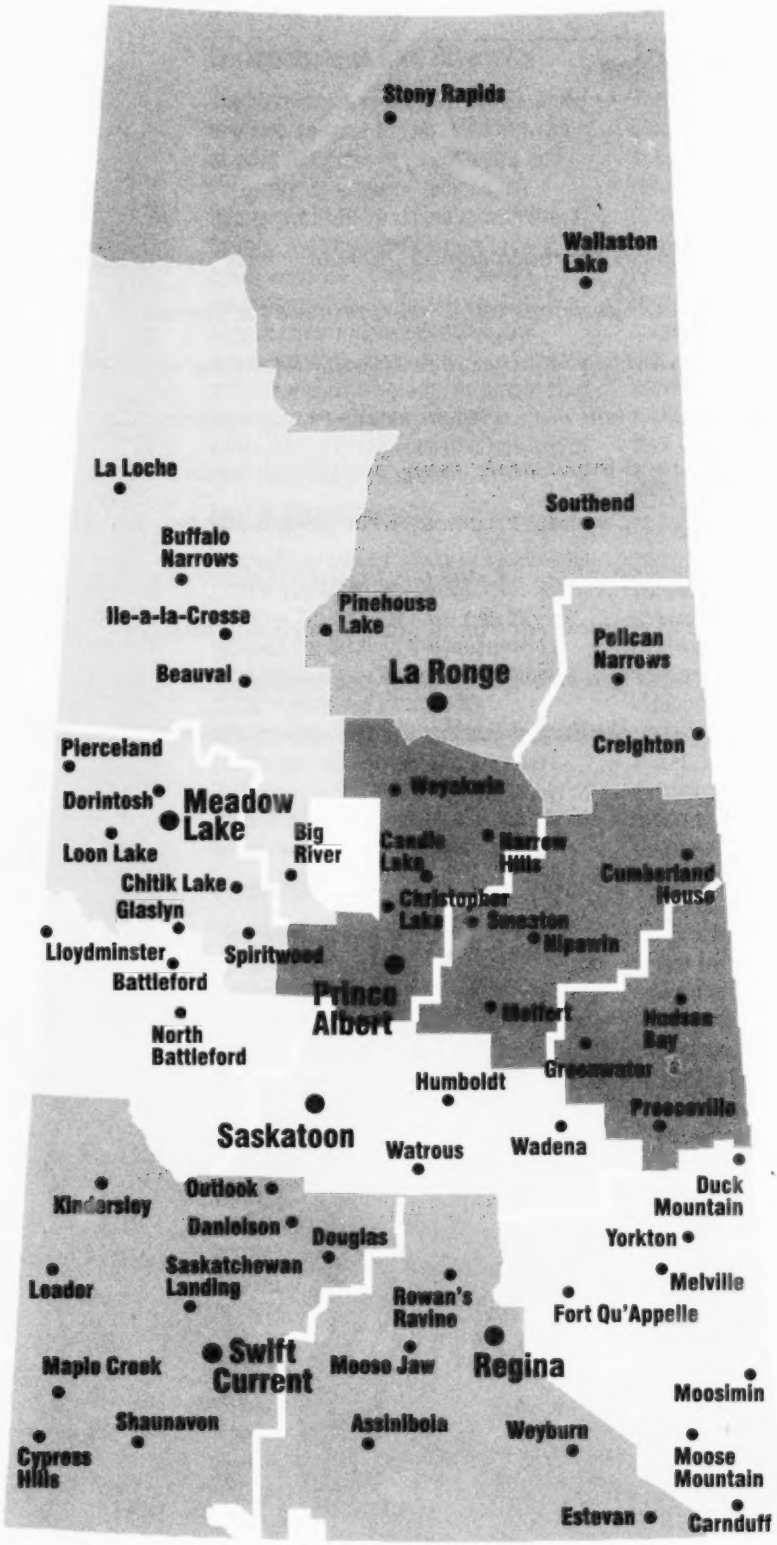
Collective "We"

The department use of teams, technology and other horizontal and vertical communications techniques builds a stronger sense of corporate thinking as opposed to branch thinking. Organizational barriers to communication are disappearing as a result of integration of resource sector staff in both central office and regional offices. Service bureaus are gaining positive feedback from staff who report administration is more responsive to their needs and is becoming an important part of the regional management teams. SERM's Corporate Development Unit and the Organizational Development Working Group are taking a lead in managing cultural issues in the organization. The reorganization process itself was designed to encourage and support involvement of all staff to encourage them to take ownership of department changes. The organization's new values and the structural and process changes designed to support those values foster a stronger corporate culture.

Conclusion

The ecosystem approach cannot guarantee wise environmental management decisions but it helps provide the context for the broader thinking required to fully examine the natural resource and environment management issues facing the province. Perhaps most importantly, from an organizational point of view, it provides a consistent framework or perspective for all staff to use in making decisions, has positioned the department closer to clientele to promote environmental stewardship and is contributing to a stronger sense of personal and corporate influence on challenges facing the provincial environment.

Stony Rapids
Wollaston Lake
La Loche
Southend
Buffalo Narrows
Pinehouse Lake
Ile-a-la-Crosse
Pelican Narrows
Beauval
La Ronge
Creighton
Pierceland
Weyakwin
Dorintosh
Meadow Lake
Big River
Candle Lake
Narrow Hills
Loon Lake
Cumberland House
Chitik Lake
Christopher Lake
Glaslyn
Smeaton
Nipawin
Lloydminster
Spiritwood
Battleford
Prince Albert
Melfort
Hudson Bay
North Battleford
Greenwater
Humboldt
Preeceville
Saskatoon
Watrous
Wadena
Duck Mountain
Kindersley
Outlook
Danielson
Douglas
Yorkton
Saskatchewan Landing
Melville
Leader
Rowan's Ravine
Fort Qu'Appelle
Swift Current
Moose Jaw
Regina
Maple Creek
Moosimin
Shaunavon
Assiniboia
Weyburn
Moose Mountain
Cypress Hills
Estevan
Carnduff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Facts and Questions about Working in the New Organizational Design

How will the new organizational design affect our day-to-day work in the department? The following answers are based on responses to a questionnaire which was presented at Management Forum in January 1998 and to other managers in the department. The answers provided below may help to clarify the department's expectations of the new organizational design that we are now working in.

Team Work

1 With fewer layers and clear reporting relationships it will be easier to know who my real boss is in our new organization.

- **False** **In our new organization I may have more than one boss depending upon the work I am doing, and I will often be called on to provide leadership to staff whom I don't directly supervise.**

2 The staff in a Branch/EcoRegion will be shared when needed for department priorities and special projects.

- **True** **Managers will need to collaborate with each other, with regional offices and between branches to organize project teams for priority work, and provide staff as necessary to accomplish department priorities, build cross-organizational experience and for staff career development.**

3 The new organization is radically different from the old one and will operate in ways that seem foreign to some who have worked in the department for many years.

- **True** **More emphasis on team work and projects will result in a more dynamic organization. Structures will be less rigid and defined.**

The Changing Role of the Manager

4 Managers' jobs are substantially different than the jobs of our predecessors.

- **True** **To survive in this flatter, streamed organization, managers at all levels need to operate in a team fashion with those they supervise, with other managers, with outside organizations and many others. Along with the staff they supervise, managers will be responsible to a number of different "bosses" depending upon the team they happen to be working with. This is a different culture than we had in the past - more open, more flexible, more empowered. Managers will be accountable to each other, to their staff, to our customers and the department as a whole. Technical knowledge and past accomplishments will be less important to a manager's success than management skills, innovation and team building.**

5 The level of decisions that managers will be making in the new organization will be of a similar nature as in the past.

- **False** **With fewer managers and a flatter organization at all work locations, managers will need to take more initiative and lead in an empowered fashion. Upward delegation will not be feasible with so many staff reporting to each level of management.**

6 Every manager's most important role is to add value to the work of those they supervise.

- **True** **Managers are primarily responsible for leading, supporting and developing staff. Their job and job knowledge should add value to those they supervise.**

Ecosystem Management

7 Moving to an ecosystem approach to management will require less focus on monitoring the health of our ecosystems.

- **False** **The information needs for our decision making processes will shift to focus on ecological indicators and stresses on the ecosystem. We will need to focus more on monitoring the health of Saskatchewan's ecosystems.**

Decentralized Service Delivery

8 Our new areas will operate in basically the same fashion as our old districts.

- **False** **The larger pool of staff available should make scheduling and accomplishing high priority jobs more manageable. Managers will have the time and mandate to concentrate on training, developing and coaching staff to accomplish the priorities for the area. Managers will manage staff rather than work content.**

9 The program delivery designs and staff assignments used to accomplish such things as environmental protection or oil and gas reviews need to be very similar in every EcoRegion for consistency across the province.

- **False** **The EcoRegion management teams must develop and continually adjust their plans for delivery considering staff capabilities, program requirements in the EcoRegion, advice from program branches, etc.**

10 The new larger areas are expected to give us more consistency in program delivery decisions.

- **True and False** **There is a better opportunity for consistency across each area with a larger area not fragmented into many small districts; successful approaches at one location can more easily be extended across the whole area with a single manager and teamwork approaches in place. Consistency between areas should depend on the ecological priorities of the EcoRegion. What makes sense from an ecological perspective in the Grassland EcoRegion, for example, should make sense generally from area to area within this EcoRegion (for example protecting the integrity of native prairie). Greater inconsistency might be expected between EcoRegions, justified by ecological considerations or differences in the communities served by the department.**

11 EcoRegions, Program Branches and Corporate Services share joint ownership in program outcomes at the local level.

- **True** **Individual citizens and communities make the day-to-day decisions about development and land use that determine whether or not the environment is damaged or sustained. Our mandate to encourage sustainable development requires us to work at the local level to inform and encourage decisions that sustain the environment. SERM will promote an expanded role for local governments in delivery of departmental programs such as environmental assessment, land use planning and implementation of various environmental protection initiatives. EcoRegions handle the direct contacts with local citizens and communities. Program branches provide policies, expert knowledge and advice to guide this contact at the local level. Service Bureaus provide financial and human resource services to support both the EcoRegions' delivery and Program Branches' advisory work.**

12 Program Branches will continue to deliver programs until such time as adequate resources are in place to enable Operations staff to deliver the programs.

- **False** **It is unrealistic to expect that SERM will see a large increase in FTEs in the foreseeable future. The shift of program delivery to the field requires a transformation in the delivery and evaluation functions. Program branch staff must work with EcoRegion staff to develop plans and work together to accomplish this transformation.**

13 With fewer managers to direct and supervise staff, more specific policy direction will be needed to ensure consistency across the province.

- **False** **Operational guidelines will replace prescriptive policies and procedures, and staff will be expected to exercise their good judgement. Staff can also look to their managers for support, mentoring, feedback and coaching.**

14 Operations staff from each of the work streams will be closely involved in the development of new policy pieces relevant to their job specialty.

- **True** **Key field staff will continue to be instrumental in providing input and assisting with public consultations developing new policies. For example, staff from the forest protection stream are key players on the project team developing policies for fire, insect and disease management in forest ecosystems. These people as well as area managers, integrated resource managers and staff from the park stream will play important roles in the public consultation process for this work.**

15 Each area will be managed to address the issues and environment in the area; each one will be different depending on the local conditions and customers.

- **True** **We can't afford the time or manpower to run identical delivery programs in every area regardless of what the local ecosystem protection needs and community priorities are. We also can't afford to spend effort on low priority activities at the expense of local ecosystem protection needs and the priorities of local communities.**

16 Environmental impact reviews of project proposals through EcoRegions will not appreciably change the effectiveness of our ecosystem protection work.

- **False** **Regional responsibility for coordinating department comments on projects being reviewed in the environmental assessment process has improved the ability of this process to implement sustainable development objectives for the province in the following areas:**
  - **a) having project planning incorporate regional and environmental protection and resource management concerns;**
  - **b) effective monitoring and enforcement of compliance with requirements placed on proponents as a result of review through the assessment process; and**
  - **c) dealing with the cumulative effects of development in the process.**

Continuing Change

17 Now that the major changes have been made in our structure and staffing, things will settle down for a while and we can get back to business as usual.

- **False** **Managers now need to lead the transition of all those at the working level; they need to be informed, involved in planning the new work, and supported in their new roles. We can expect that our transition to make the new organization fully functional will continue to be a major challenge for managers and staff for the foreseeable future.**

18 The concentrated internal communications and staff involvement efforts we have used in "Redefining the Department" cannot be sustained as we return to more stable conditions.

- **False** **Operating in an empowered organization, staff have to be fully informed at all levels. Helping people move through transition to fully operationalize the new organization will require sustained dedication to communication and involvement.**

19 I can expect to be informed of new developments and information relative to my areas of responsibility as things change in the department.

- **True** **In addition to the traditional information sharing techniques that we have used in the past, we will all have a personal responsibility for accessing information that we need to inform ourselves about through the Intranet/Internet.**

Corporate Planning

20 Area and EcoRegion Plans will begin to play a larger role in the Corporate Planning process in our new organization.

- **True** **Implementing an ecosystem-based approach to managing our environment and resources means that Area and EcoRegion plans will reflect priorities to ensure ecosystem health and integrity. It is this focus that will increasingly drive our corporate planning efforts in the future.**

21 Program branches, EcoRegions and Corporate Services will be involved in each others' work planning.

- **True** **Integrated program delivery means that the skill sets and resources needed to accomplish the department's priority work will be available when and where they are needed. Involvement in each others' work planning is necessary to make sure that program design, delivery and support are coordinated to accomplish the department's priorities.**

Administrative Services

22 Our Service Bureau Model is expected to consolidate service functions and transactional activities and thereby relieve Operations and Program staff of administrative demands.

- **True** **Administrative and program support functions were arranged into a Service Bureau Model to provide a stronger service orientation in solving financial and human resource problems. The change to Service Bureaus is also expected to eliminate duplication and streamline processes.**

23 The Public Service Commission is responsible for the development of department staff.

- **False** **Department managers are responsible for their personal development and that of their staff. The department Organizational Development Working Group will identify and guide department actions that support people development.**

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